

BOOK REVIEW

The Government of Scotland 1560-1625. Julian Goodare. Oxford University Press, 2004. 342pp. £65. ISBN 0 19 9243549

Already highly regarded for his scholarly studies of government and witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland, Julian Goodare's new book reiterates the value of his contributions to the field. While his previous monograph on Scottish governance (*State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford University Press, 1999)) explored how the state asserted itself in terms of religion, territory, warfare, et al.: essentially what government did; this new work takes a more holistic, nuanced and intricate look at how the government operated and developed. *The Government of Scotland 1560-1625* considers who participated in government (as well as who was excluded), how it affected various components of society and how it established legitimacy while concurrently introducing significant innovations. Drawing broadly from primary and secondary sources the book dissects how Scotland's government functioned from the Reformation to the death of James VI, elucidating its gradual transformation from decentralized governance in the medieval period to an "absolutist" state under Mary and her son. In addition to being an excellent case study of Scotland, Goodare places the country in the context of its wider early modern political context by drawing comparisons to other European states (particularly England, Spain, and France) and tackles the long standing question of whether a "Stewart Revolution" of government actually took place.

The Government of Scotland eloquently argues a centralization of power occurred in early modern Scotland through the establishment and manipulation of complex reciprocal relationships between the monarchy and influential individuals/groups. As a result, personal monarchy took root for the first time under Mary and James VI, representing a dramatic shift in Scotland, where previously ultimate authority rested with individual lairds and nobles within their local spheres of influence. These two Stewart monarchs successfully persuaded powerful local

nobles and lairds to pledge their loyalty to the crown in return for compensation in the form of land, wealth, patents or patronage. One means by which this took place was the division of church lands into new secular lordships after the Reformation. In return for their improved status, this new class of gentry provided support for the monarchy within their various localities. "From being a decentralized kingdom based on the power of a landed aristocracy," states Goodare, "Scotland had become a centralized kingdom based on the power of a landed aristocracy." Thus the source of power did not change, but by successfully attaining new bonds of loyalty the monarchy created an increasingly centralized, absolutist state.

Goodare masterfully depicts the complexity of the Stewart's acquisition of increased personal power. Personal monarchy took root by way of patronage but the patrons achieved a legislative voice, in other words: absolute rule came by trading powers. Hence, the expanding *body politic* under James VI extended beyond the gentry. The coalescence of authority required increasingly formalized recognition of traditional power structures and sources of lobbying and economic influence. Goodare notes the admission of the shires into Parliament as "an event of seismic proportions", especially as Parliament had become increasingly important by the Reformation: transforming from a forum of debate into a legislative body. Its central role in dictating policy was demonstrated in 1560 when Parliament, not the monarch, declared Scotland Protestant. As a legislative body Parliament played an important function in the governments of Mary and James VI by producing legislation at an unprecedented rate. It systematized Scotland's "old laws" and Parliamentary statutes replaced antiquity as the ultimate mark of authority. Through this legislated legal transformation Parliament provided the monarchy new tools with which to govern, but equally limited monarchical rule to being "with [the] consent" of Parliament.

Nowhere is the monarchy's pursuit of asserting dominance by reciprocal arrangement more clearly demonstrated by Goodare than in his analysis of government policy toward the Highlands. Numerous

efforts were made to subdue the “barbarous” Highlanders in the early modern period, including attempts by private corporations to colonise Hebridean islands, but these met with little success. Under James VI a new policy prevailed. Goodare skilfully explains how, much like European colonial dominance in eighteenth-century Africa, the crown used “client chiefs” to assert control. In this arrangement compliant clans, such as Clan Campbell, increased their power and influence within the Highlands—and eventually with the crown as their sway in the Highlands grew—at the direct expense of their neighbours. Although not an ideal arrangement for the state, it represented the cheapest option and proved to be an extremely effective means whereby the state exploited traditional clan rivalries. The policy forced clans to recognise the supremacy of the crown or risk losing out to rival clans under royal sanction.

Evidence for the positive achievement of the government’s policy and successful centralization of authority is demonstrably evidenced by the central rule of law gradually replacing blood feuds, the traditional means of settling disputes in Scotland. Goodare deems this to be an essential process in the context of Scotland. Whereas other European states tended to be ruled by an urban nobility; the rural elite traditionally ruled Scotland. Through the monarchy’s gradual cultivation of loyalty and patronage from the rural elite, the focus of government shifted from individual localities to the court—and ultimately to the law courts of Edinburgh. The crown’s successful policy of drawing power unto itself made it necessary for families with aspirations to have relatives residing at court.

The added demands on an increasingly centralized government were met by mounting bureaucracy. Governmental structures were rarely replaced; instead new positions and institutions were added alongside the old, resulting in what Goodare describes as an “intensification of government”. One of the most important changes occurred under Mary with the retention of the Privy Council by an adult monarch, evidence that “government was becoming more elaborate”. The Privy Council, consisting of some of Scotland’s most influential

men, progressively took responsibility for carrying out the daily operation of government, thus freeing the monarchy from unwanted involvement in menial decision making. Gradually, however, the Privy Council became the "central organ" of the government, carrying out the day-to-day business with such efficiency that when James VI visited Denmark in 1589-90 it was deemed unnecessary to appoint a regent. Goodare argues that this evolution of the Privy Council prepared the government of Scotland for James' move to London in 1603 and ensured that governance would continue to run smoothly in the king's absence. Additional innovations also assisted in transforming Scotland's government. The introduction of justices of the peace, justice ayres, central courts, more prisons and the rise of the legal profession all entrenched the central rule of law. Better-trained and better-qualified notaries and the centralized regulation of land charters by the register of sasines aided the government in monitoring land ownership. Fiscal changes, including the establishment of a permanent exchequer and the issuing of patents for tax collecting, improved the efficiency and regularity of taxation, enabling the state to be more financially stable than ever before. One example in particular might be the most important in supporting the growth of Scottish government under James VI. Goodare's claim that J.P.s based on the English model were active in Scotland from 1609, despite traditional scholarship arguing they did not arise with any success until the end of the century, offers an important indication of the successful exportation of bureaucracy from the state into the localities and suggests a bureaucratic complexity generally underestimated by modern scholars.

In spite of the fundamental shift towards centralization government maintained roots at the local level. Rather than being replaced or overshadowed, Goodare argues traditional local government became integrated into the larger bureaucratic machine to form "components of an absolutist administrative system focused on the royal court". His research demonstrates the ratio of "local" government officials to citizens increased fourfold during this period, which is all the more momentous since the population grew as well. In modern terms,

government got bigger and effectively exerted its power. Goodare demonstrates that the state which emerged under James VI successfully used ideological, economic and military power to coerce the population (including the nobility and gentry) in a programme of political and cultural conformity.

Church historians will appreciate Goodare's emphasis on the role the Reformation played as an ideological driving force behind the dynamic changes in Scotland's government. He argues Protestant theory necessitated a doctrine of state sovereignty in order to fill the void created by the removal of the papacy as a "supra-national" authority in Europe. An additional important outcome of Scotland's new Protestant disposition, politically speaking, was that it prevented any possibility of a Franco-Scots union of crowns and cultivated closer ties with their Protestant neighbours in England. The impact of Protestantism did not, however, lead to tension free co-operation between the Kirk and state. Parliament established Protestant religion in 1560 and although the Kirk perceived itself to be subordinate to this representative governmental body, it would not submit to royal prerogative. Hence with the establishment of Jacobean bishops in 1600 and the formation of a High Commission in 1610-12, tensions between the Kirk and the monarchy grew as many in the church felt "personal monarchy" had overstepped its bounds. If there is one aspect of this book which will leave the church historian hungry for more, it is Goodare's short treatment of the dynamic between Kirk and king and the important part this would play in the political changes manifested during the reign of his son, Charles I. Yet to be fair to the author, ecclesiastical history is not the focus of this book nor is the government of Scotland after the death of James VI.

While neither students nor scholars should approach this work with hopes of ascertaining precisely how the government operated at any particular point in time, it should be considered essential reading for anyone interested in the functionality or formation of government in early modern Scotland. The splendour of Goodare's book is its complex and nuanced evaluation of how Scotland's government evolved between

1560 and 1625, as well as, his careful examination of the contributing factors, individuals, social structures and emerging pressure groups. Most importantly, in light of this fine piece of scholarship it can now be stated, taking into account Goodare's careful stipulation that the term need not necessitate a rapid change or radicalism, that Scotland did indeed experience a "revolution" of government under the Stewarts.

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